DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 165 SO 035 049

AUTHOR	Beasley, Amy; Rowell, Kevin
TITLE	Differences in Motivations between Fundamental Christians and Atheists on the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities.
PUB DATE	2003-02-00
NOTE	18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (26th, San Antonio, TX, February 13-15, 2003).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitude Measures; Comparative Analysis; *Group Membership; Higher Education; *Motivation; Predictor Variables; Questionnaires; Regression (Statistics)
IDENTIFIERS	*Atheism; *Religious Fundamentalism; Students as Subjects

ABSTRACT

A study examined differences in motivations between fundamental Christians and atheists on the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities. Only five of the 15 areas measured by the Reiss Profile were used in the study. The hypothesis was that (within these areas: (1) independence, (2) power, (3) vengeance, (4) status, and (5) honor) the fundamental Christian group would show a greater desire for that of honor and a lower desire for independence, power, vengeance, and status. Participants (n=64: 45 fundamental Christian, 19 atheist), university students, were assessed on the Reiss Profile to examine the degree of desires and motivations of the two groups. A demographic questionnaire was given along with the Reiss Profile, to ensure that the study group included candidates belonging to either category. A logistic regression analysis was used to predict membership from the five subscales that were selected as predictors. The subscale honor was the greatest predictor of group membership, specifically those in the religious group scored significantly higher on honor than did the atheists. Results failed to indicate independence as a strong predictor of group membership. The other subscales did not show any statistical differences. The demographic questionnaire is appended. (Contains 11 references and 4 tables.) (Author/BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Running head: MOTIVATIONS AND DESIRES

ED 479 165

Differences in Motivations between Fundamental Christians and Atheists on the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities

Amy Beasley

Kevin Rowell

The University of Central Arkansas

Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, San Antonio, Texas, February 2003.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Beasley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

SO 035 049

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract

Differences in motivations between fundamental Christians and atheists on the *Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities* were examined in this study. Only five of the fifteen areas measured by the Reiss Profile were used in this study. The hypothesis was that within these areas, independence, power, vengeance, status and honor, the fundamental Christian group will show a greater desire for that of honor and a lower desire for independence, power, vengeance, and status. Sixty-four participants (45 fundamental Christian, 19 atheist) were assessed on *The Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities* to examine the degree of desires and motivations of the two groups. A demographic questionnaire was given along with the *Reiss Profile* in order to ensure those being studied do indeed fall into either extreme category. A logistic regression analysis was used to predict membership from the five subscales that were selected as predictors.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Differences in Motivations between Fundamental Christians and Atheists on the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities

Background

Much of psychology today is concerned with the underlying motivations of person's actions related to the degree of one's religious beliefs. Although there has not been one single answer provided to this broad question, several potential answers have been offered. Fowler (1981) stated in his Faith Development Theory that by examining the personal history and the present stage in life, the relative scale of religiosity can be explained. Fowler stated that for every specific time of life, there is a corresponding type of lifestyle that appears to be most prevalent. The lifestyle includes most of one's activities, including religious and social interactions (Streib, 2001). There are five religious styles (or stages). They are as follows: subjective religious style, instrumental-reciprocal style, mutual religious style, individuative-systemtic religious style, and the dialogical religious styles. Fowler examined and further explained religious activity with the style of life and frame of mind of the individual at each particular stage. One example of this happens many times in the teen years when a young person tries on many types of personalities, and this diversity also includes one's religious belief.

Similar to Fowler's theory, Oser's Theory to the Developmental Frame of Judgment postulated that each individual responds to a religious dilemma within his/her deep religious structure (Oser, 1991) and that this deep religious structure also corresponds to the person's place in the life cycle. The life cycle has five separate stages. The first is Oser labeled as the Orientation of religious heteronomy. God is understood as

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the Ultimate Being and has absolute power. The second is labeled as 'give so that you may receive. God is seen also as an all-knowing being but can be persuaded in either direction with good or evil deeds. Deism is the common view of the third stage and the individual is the one most responsible for their fate. God is reduced to only an outside observer. Fourthly, God is the Being that brings all things to a positive end. The fifth and last stage is that of unconditional religiosity. The individual sees religion more as a model for living than an absolute truth. There has been some validation for this theory with a study done by Oser and Gmunder (1988). The stages corresponded with ages seven to twenty-five; however, this trend did not continue past age twenty-five.
Without further study and testing of the theory itself through adulthood, Oser's theory cannot be held as a concrete explanation for life-long belief.

In a study of the level of complexity of thinking of fundamentalists and liberal Christians, Hunsburger, Alista, Prancer, and Pratt (1996) found that those who ranked high in religiosity, such as orthodox and fundamental Christian, did indeed seem to have less doubt about their convictions and about their worldviews; however, the researchers did not find any evidence that the highly religious were any less complex in their level of critical thinking. This implies that the level of intelligence is not a factor in determining the level of religiosity.

Streyffeler and McNally (1998) examined personality characteristics in Protestant Christians on the NEO Five Factor Inventory. Their results indicated that the fundamentalists did not rate as high as those in the liberal group in the area of being open

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

to new experiences, not only in religion but also in daily life. In another such study conducted involving personality characteristics and the long-term attendance of religious service in relation to levels of psychotism, neuroticism, extraversion, and the Lie dimensions. Long-term steady church attendance seemed to correlate with a lower rate of neuroticism instead of the expected psycotism (Dunne, Martin, Panagan, & Heath, 1997). This signifies that those who rate high on the level of neuroticism may be less emotionally healthy, for they are not able to maintain stable behavior patterns such as church attendance. There was no significant correlation between regular church attendance and levels of psychotism, extraversion or the Lie dimensions. One contrasting study pertaining to the levels of psychotism found that there is a significant negative correlation between the levels of psychotism and that of both prayer and church attendance (Francis, 1997). This is a significant difference between the two studies and further indicates the need for more extensive study of the personality and motivations of the devoutly religious.

Personality characteristics of atheists have been previously studied but not to the extent that has been conducted with Christians. One very dated study by Vetter and Green (1932) reported results concerning a variety of characteristics of atheists. The topics included age, religion of parents, demographics and various other related characteristics. In spite of the many variables analyzed, there were no concluding findings regarding explicit areas of motivations or that of personality. This lack of definitive research indicates a need for further research regarding the specific area of the motivations within the personalities of atheists.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

More recently, *The Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities* has been conducted and applied in several areas but has been only used to study religious differences in only one instance which Reiss himself conducted. When the *Reiss Profile* was conducted previously regarding the area of religion, there were no significant differences were found between religious and nonreligious people almost every one of the 15 domains; however one statistically significant difference was found in the area of independence which is "the desire for self-reliance." It should be noted that there is distinct difference between the independence and power.Devout Christians do not seem to submit anymore than those of liberal convictions to those in powerful positions, such as political leaders. The low desire for independence only implies that those types of people desire experiences that cause them to depend on love objects and work interpedently (Reiss 2000). This exception is an interesting one and may be further confounded with the proposed research in that the previous study was not conducted between extreme groups of fundamental Christians and atheists alone.

From the literature review, it is evident that research is needed in the area of motivational differences between devoutly religious and atheistic people. More specifically, if fundamental Christians and atheists represent the two extremes of belief in God, are they actually similar in their motivations by virtue of being extremes in belief, or do they differ? For example, Christians are expected to exhibit humility and put others first which would be reflected in lower scores in power. The hypothesis for this study is that there will differences between the groups of atheists and fundamentalists Christians on the five measured areas of the 15 fundamental desires as measured by *The Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities.* The hypothesis is that

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

within these areas, independence, power, vengeance, status and honor, the fundamental Christian group will exhibit a greater desire for that of honor and a lower desire for the area of independence, power, vengeance, and status. As mentioned above, it was found in a previous study that the religious group was found to have a lower score in the area of independence. Honor will be higher for the fundamental Christian group given their strict Biblical teachings of order and reverence for authority. Power and status will also be lower for the Christian group because of the Biblical teachings of humility. The Biblical teachings of forgiveness will also influence the fundamental Christian group to rank the area of vengeance as less important than the atheist group.

Method

Participants

Participants were drawn from university students at a southern state university. Selection was from a self-report measure of degree of religious beliefs to assure two groups with extreme views. The participants belonging to the group "fundamentalists" came mainly from a religious campus organization that defines itself as having fundamental religious beliefs. The second group of participants, labeled "atheists," were obtained for the most part from the Philosophy and Religion Club also on campus. The Philosophy and Religion Club typically holds beliefs that are either atheist or in the direction of an atheistic position. Surveys were provided for as many participants within the two clubs that are willing to take part in the study. There were a total of 45 participants within the fundamental Christian group. The atheist group contained 19 participants.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Materials

Demographic questionnaire The preliminary demographic questionnaire was a simple 4-question survey regarding the variables age, race, gender, and lastly level of religiosity (see Appendix A). Religiosity was a self-report measurement in which the participant was asked to rate their level of religiosity on a scale of 1 to 10, one being the furthest level of atheism, defined as one who has no belief in any god and has forethought to why he/she believes this to be so. Ten was the highest measure of religiosity, meaning those who have a definite belief in the Christian God and also believe the Bible to be literally true and follow it to the best of his or her ability. Only those ranking from one to three and eight to ten, respectively, were included in the results.

Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities (Reiss, 2000) The *Reiss Profile* is a 104-item self-report survey that accesses a person's 15 fundamental motives and desires according to Reiss and Havercamp (1998) (see Appendix A). Its main purpose is to assess the key motivations behind several general likes or dislikes of people. The Reiss Profile tests fifteen fundamental desires of each participant.

For the purposes of this study, only five of the fifteen total subscales were measured in the results. Independence was assessed because of the results of the prior study because the area of independence was the only statistically significant different area. Power and vengeance was also included within the study for the Christian religion has strict teachings on how a person should behave toward others within these two areas. Power here is defined as the ability to exert control over others and the environment. Vengeance is the idea of paying others back for inflicted harm. Status was measured also because of the Christian emphasis on group cohesion and being with a community and

church. Lastly, honor was measured because of the emphasis placed upon this within religion. "Honor thy father and mother," is one example of the teachings within the Christian religion.

Procedure

The survey was conducted with volunteers at each separate group's meeting. Each group was told that the survey is an opinion survey of student beliefs. The demographic questionnaire was given along with the *Reiss Profile*. All participants were ensured of confidentiality of their responses and signed a statement of confidentiality before completing the assessment. Participants were given a debriefing immediately following completing the survey.

Results

Pearson product-moment correlations of the predictors did not reveal any significant muluticollinearity (Table 1) with the two highest correlations being that of Status and Power ($r=.423$, $p<.001$) and of Honor and Vengeance ($r=.416$, $p<.001$). Independent t-tests of each of the predictors (Table 2) indicated that Honor ($t=.744$, $df = 62$, $p<.001$), Independence ($t=.287$, $df = 62$, $p = .006$), and Vengeance ($t = 3.44$, $df = 62$, $p =.001$). As a result of the initial analysis, Honor, Independence, and Vengeance were retained as predictors. In building the logistic model, all possible subsets of the three predictors were analyzed.

Results of the analyses indicated that only Honor had significant utility in classifying religious and atheist groups. When all three predictors were entered into the model (Table 3), the classification accuracy was quite good (hit rate = 87.1%), and the variance in group membership accounted for by the model was also good (Nagelkerke R^2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

= .630). According to the Wald statistic, however, only Honor (Wald = 12.54, df = 1, p <.001) added significant predictive power to the model. As a result, another logistic regression was analyzed using on Honor as the predictor of group membership (Table 4). Results indicated accounted for by the model remained good (Nagelkerke R^2 = .604). Positive Predictive Value was very high (PPV = 93.3 %), whereas Negative Predictive Value was fair (NPV = 68.4 %). The greater accuracy for PPV was no surprising given the ration of religious to atheist subjects, 45 to 19 respectively.

Discussion

The subscale Honor was the greatest predictor of group membership, specifically that those in the religious group scored significantly higher on Honor than did the atheists. One possible reason for this difference is the emphasis upon honoring one's family within Christianity and the Jewish faith, as in the commandment to honor your father and mother. Without this emphasis within the atheist group, it is likely that they would not see the area of honor as of that great importance. We also predicted that independence would be lower for the fundamental Christian group. Our results failed to indicate independence as a strong predictor of group membership. his may have been because our participants were all college students. The prior study that Reiss (2000) conducted found that independence was the only area that ranked significantly different between the religious and non-religious group. Because our participants were college students, perhaps they were looking gain independence from their parents, so the religious, as well as the atheist group, would rank independence similarly. The Reiss study used mental health workers and some college students. The different results

between the two studies may have been due to the characteristics and age of the participants themselves.

The hypothesis also predicted that the Christian group would rank the subscales of vengeance, power, and status as less important than the atheist group. The results for vengeance were in support of our hypothesis, but we did not find any significant statistical differences. This is likely to be due to the relatively small number of participants. Power and status were not significantly different between the two groups. This may be due to our participants being college students. Most college students are at a point in their lives where power and status are not stressed as much within their daily lives as it would be in a business position or raising a family.

One possible way to improve this study is to obtain more participants within the atheist group. It was difficult to find participants who ranked themselves as strong atheists. This is likely to be because the study took place on a college campus that is located in a predominately Christian town. One might attempt to find those ranking as atheist by surveying more than one college campus. It is also possible that this study would have more participants within the atheist group if it were conducted elsewhere in the nation. The results may be more accurate if the number of participants for each group was better matched.

A limitation of the study is that the sample size was not very large which could have affected the results since logistic regression requires larger ratios of subjects to predictors than does linear multiple regression. With larger sample sizes, Independence and Vengeance may indeed prove to be important predictors.

The significance of the findings of our research has the possibility to have an impact on counseling psychology. With understanding that honor is more likely to be important to those who are extremely religious, one is better able to understand the motives behind certain actions of this group. Also, it is beneficial to realize that those who are in extremely religious or non-religious groups may have similar areas of importance within their lives. Once again, this is important because the better able a psychologist is able to understand the patient, the more likely he/she will be able to help the patient. Because understanding and then providing help for those who seek it is the goal of counseling psychology, this study has the possibility to influence and help this area of psychology as a whole.

References

Dunne, M., Martin, N., Pangan, T., & Heath, A. (1997). Personality and change in the frequency of religious observance. *Personality Individual Differences, 23,* 527-530.

Fowler, J. (1981) *Stages of faith.* San Francisco, CA: Harper Row.

Francis, L. (1997). Personality, prayer and church attendance among undergraduate students. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 7(2),* 127-132.

Hunsberger, B., Alisat, S., Pancer, S., & Pratt, M. (1996). Religious fundamentalism and religious doubts: Content, connections, and complexity of thinking. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 6(3),* 201-220.

Oser, F. (1991). The development of religious judgment. *New Directions for Child Development, 52,* 5-25.

Oser, F., & Gmunder P. (1988) *The human being- Stages of his or her religious development: A structural genetic approach.* (2nd ed.) Gutersloch, Germany: Gerd Mohn.

Reiss, S. (2000) Why people turn to religion: A motivational analysis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39 (4),* 47-52.

Reiss, S. & Havercamp, S. (1998). Toward a comprehensive assessment of fundamental motivation: Factor structure of the Reiss Profiles. *Psychological Assessment, 10,* 97-106.

Streib, H. (2001). Faith development theory revisited: The religious styles perspective. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 11(3),* 143-158.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Streyffeler, L., & McNally, R. (1998) Fundamentalists and liberals: Personality characteristics of protestant christians. *Personality Individual Differences, 24 (4),* 579-580.

Vetter, G., & Green, M. (1932). Personality and group factors in the making of atheists. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 27,* 179-194.

Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your race? (Circle One)

Caucasian African American Hispanic Asian Native American Other

3. What is your gender (Circle One)

Male Female

4. Please circle the number that best describes you.

1-No belief in any God and forethought to why this is so- 1

2- Not believe in God-not sure why this is so- 2

3- Belief there is no God but hold that others can believes as they choose – 3

4- Are not sure of the presence of a God in the world – 4

5- Not sure of a God or why it matters in the practical world – 5

6- Belief in a God but no religious practice – 6

7- Belief in God- only attend church service regularly – 7

8- Belief in God and regular church attendance- not sure of all religious doctrine – 8

9- Belief in Christian God, firm belief in faith, but no firm specific belief of the Bible – 9

10- Believe in Christian God and believe Bible to be literally true - 10

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Table 1

Intercorrelations Between Subscales of the Reiss Profile

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Honor	--	-.33	-.063	.031	-.416
2. Independence		--	.157	.287	.346
3. Power			--	.423	.184
4. Status				--	.253
5. Vengeance					--

Table 2

Independent t-Tests Between Religious (R) and Atheist (A) Students on the Reiss Profile

Variable	t	df	Sign. (two-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Honor	7.44	62	.000	1.58
Independence	2.87	62	.006	.72
Power	.56	62	.578	.13
Status	.582	62	.563	.17
Vengeance	3.44	62	.001	.94

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 3

Summary of Logistic Regression with Honor, Independence, and Vengeance as Predictors of Religious Preference

Variable	B	SE B	Wald	Signif.
Honor	-2.00	.57	12.54	.000
Independence	.30	.42	.52	.47
Vengeance	.43	.41	1.12	.29
Constant	-1.30	.44	8.85	.003

Note: Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .63$; Classification Accuracy = 89.1%

Table 4

Summary of Logistic Regression with Honor as Predictor of Religious Preference

Variable	B	SE B	Wald	Signif.
Honor	-2.20	.54	16.53	.000
Constant	-1.40	.43	10.41	.001

Note: Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .60$; Classification Accuracy = 85.9%

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

AERA

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Differences in Motivations between Fundamental Christians and Atheists on the Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals and Motivational Sensitivities	
Author(s): Amy Beasley, Kevin Rowell	
Corporate Source: The University of Central Arkansas	Publication Date: –

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Amy Beasley	Printed Name/Position/Title: Amy Beasley / Student	
Organization/Address: UCA Box 5573 201 Donaghey Ave Conway, AR 72035	Telephone: 501-852-7025	FAX: –
	E-Mail Address: beasleyae@hotmail.com	Date: 2-18-03

(Over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/CHESS
2805 E. Tenth Street, #120
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfacility.org

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2001)